



PROJECT CATEGORIES OVERVIEW

Club Life

Introduction

In 2001, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy revamped its Student Leadership Development (SLD) program with a focus on club life on campus. There are two types of clubs at IMSA. The first are co-curriculars sponsored by the Board of Trustees. These organizations are funded by IMSA and formally bear the Academy's name, meaning that their work is accountable on an institutional level and their adult advisors consequently play a larger role. In contrast, the second group of clubs, those chartered by Student Council, are funded by Student Council and allowed to create events and programming around campus. Their advisors, with few restrictions from the Academy, are asked to play a more hands-off role that allows passionate students to lead the charge in making IMSA a better place. It is this second group that the SLD team was most attracted to. Clubs offered student leadership experiences and helped IMSA students find the activities they were most interested in. A hallway sign from those years proudly proclaimed that IMSA offered "a club for every interest." Since then, the Academy's focus has changed. Slowly, chartered clubs and their leaders became complacent; satisfied with meeting expectations and with little drive to innovate their activities. The Academy reoriented their SLD strategy around a program whose curriculum they could better regulate and faculty members began to think of clubs in a lower light. Still, students remained active participants in club events. Faculty member Dr. Dong once observed that there seems to be a compulsion among students to fill every single possible space in their day with some activities or commitments. And even though many think of this as characteristic of young, curious minds, it also poses a severe time management problem – one that faculty are increasingly wary of. Marked by increasing disputes over extracurricular activities like club meetings and the annual Clash of the Halls, IMSA teachers and administrators are beginning to call for a greater focus on Academics among the student body. Student Life staff fear the writing on the walls: if Student Council and its chartered clubs cannot step up their game, the Academy may move to curtail extracurricular activities. Perhaps Student Council can learn from the extracurricular organizations that garner favor in administrative eyes. The foremost is the Student Inquiry and Research (SIR) Program, successful because it attracts immense membership and bestows recognition among its students. If clubs can reach out to the students who are most interested in them, they will have the clout and commitment to grow stronger. And if those clubs can bring accolades upon their work through competitiveness on local, state, national, and even international levels, they can truly stand out at IMSA. Student organizations suffer from logistical difficulties, especially in advertising, but this is something Student Council can assist with. However, larger problems loom ahead. Many students openly admit to pursuing club leadership positions simply to pad their resumes, a practice that weakens the base of club power and sucks the education potential out of so-called "extracurricular" activities. It is Student Council's constitutional responsibility to coordinate the chartered clubs, ensuring that they have the necessary resources and that students can participate in them without sacrificing other needs. Projects like Early Club Chartering and having Cabinet Club Liaisons demonstrate that Student Council is committed to the success of clubs. With any luck, the new two-way communication that these measures bring will provide a forum to find meaningful solutions to the problems that plague students' extracurricular experience at IMSA.



Notable Projects

Early Club Chartering

One of Student Council's constitutional duties is to charter student-led organizations, and every year this process takes place in the fall. In the spring of 2014, Student Council experimented with an Early Chartering process. The primary goals of this process were to give clubs a head start in planning time as well as help the Cabinet build stronger relationships with the organizations over the summer. Those relationships are necessary to gauge funding needs, promote extracurricular activities to incoming sophomores early on, and to build a calendar year of event with as few conflicts between clubs as possible. It was suspected that applications for this process would be low because many clubs do not choose their rising leadership on the same timetable as Student Council and those that do are preoccupied with AP exams and finals preparation to submit a charter application. Yet, many chartered clubs take advantage of the early charter process with Student Council chartering around half or more of its club during the Early Charter process. So far, the target benefits of the Early Charter seem to have been received by these clubs and as long as Student Council retains its focus and organization between Transition of Power and Homecoming, this is a sustainable process.

Peer Multicultural Educators (PME)

The Peer Multicultural Educators (PME) are a group of students dedicated to promoting diversity on the IMSA campus and sponsoring cultural activities. In 2013, their advisor, Dr. Adrienne Coleman, a former Student Council advisor, requested that Student Life shift control of the cultural clubs from Student Council to PME. That year, Student Council chartered the cultural clubs but PME immediately took over operations afterward. In 2014, Student Council chartered the cultural clubs but PME demanded that the results be scrapped in favor of its own chartering process. This became a spot of tension among the cultural clubs because Student Council, after

mediating tensions between the Eastern European Culture Club (EECC) and the Brilliant British Club (BBC), two groups that Student Life and PME wanted to merge, advocated for the clubs to remain separate. In order to help PME recover the influence it lost the previous year, Student Life agreed to let PME reassess those groups' charters and the two were eventually merged, even though they branded and handled all of their activities as if they were two separate organizations. While these debates were churning, PME was also mired in financial problems. By the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2014, PME had spent all of its funding. PME's internal costs are also high, as it spends a lot of money on inviting high profile speakers to IMSA and planning events that celebrate diversity beyond the cultural clubs. To execute these often expensive events off, PME receives subsidies from the President's Office. However, the fuzziness of their financial policies does not end there. Cultural clubs are allowed to request funds from Student Council if PME denies all or part of their request to them, a clause that often creates awkward situations between PME and Student Council. Over the summer of 2014, PME requested full control of the chartering process for the cultural clubs, and while Student Council was willing to grant this, the new PME Board had not yet been chosen and the old board did not have an application ready for the Early Chartering process that Student Council had been planning to move ahead with. Student Council accepted the Early Charter forms for cultural clubs and then made recommendations to the new PME Board, which adopted all of them, PME is the centerpiece of the President's Office and IMSA's institutional attempts to instill a key community value: diversity. In that regard PME draws much more significant criticism. Stakeholders worry that the PME focus on diversity, as unveiled in the Institutional Diversity Plan that Dr. Coleman's committee worked on during the 2013-2014 school year, was too bent along the ethnic dimensions of diverse cultures. Instead, as members of the Board of Trustees argue, varied opinions, interests, philosophical views, economic



backgrounds, academic talents, and perceptions of society are all dimensions of diversity that play bigger and often overlooked roles in an educational community than ethnicity. In addition, the chartering process being shared by Student Council and PME becomes very cumbersome. Student Council must take time to charter cultural clubs but aren't allowed to make any official decisions on the club's chartering status. In the future, we should try to shift the chartering burden for cultural clubs from Student Council to PME.

Fundraising Policy Reboot

Around 2003, IMSA parents began to complain that too their students were being asked to spend too much money at school. Because IMSA has a smaller community and thus more limited financial resources than most schools, Dr. Hernandez stepped up as the architect of a new fundraising policy that would help streamline fundraising on campus. It was designed to ensure the appropriate appropriation of the money that students are willing to spend at IMSA. Dr. Hernandez estimates this to be around \$25 on average per student and \$50 per family as of 2012. Under the policy, all groups on campus are allowed one fundraising project, which can either be a single event or a single campaign that can consist of multiple related events. Dr. Hernandez placed a crucial value on this new policy as well: making sure that money in the IMSA community is put towards the students. Per this value, Class Club and Student Council are given an exception to the policy and relatively free reign as they were deemed to have greatest need for fundraising. To increase awareness of the policy the 2014 Student Council Cabinet worked with Student Life to create an online form to request a fundraising project for groups like chartered clubs that don't traditionally host them (now known as the Universal Pipeline System found on the Student Council Website).

Service Club Mishaps

On occasion, student groups or chartered clubs are given permission to lead a fundraising project. Some clubs are chartered with fundraising as their only

real activity. However, Student Life observes that these organizations have a life of 1-2 years. Once the student who led that particular project graduates, IMSA is left with no one to continue the connection with that cause, and sometimes even extra money. This is also not good on an institutional level, because it causes IMSA to burn bridges with the organizations that students reach out to on a relative whim, because the Academy has to stop fundraising for them the next year. IMSA's guiding education philosophy values service over fundraising. One example is that IMSA regularly supports Habitat for Humanity trips with subsidies and other institutional support because it is a tremendous experience for students that does a lot of good for their cause, rather than simply donating money. Groups like Key Club also exist with the primary goal of service, and only raise funds if needed to support those ventures. These problems have prompted Student Council to consider a redesign of the way student-led service endeavors are started at IMSA, but the 2014 Student Council Cabinet was unable to devise an agreeable solution to the issue. The current solution for fundraising clubs is the Universal Pipeline System for non-Student Council chartered clubs and limiting ALL Student Council chartered clubs to one fundraiser.

Class Club Relationship

In 2008, Student Council President Mamatha Challa drafted a proposal that would outline consistent board positions for the struggling Class Clubs, who experimented with new structures every year, each more disastrous than the last. In addition to their primary objective of raising money for Senior Prom, Challa's Cabinet, disciples of Dr. Hernandez' Fundraising Policy and its primary value of ensuring that IMSA money was spent on the students, added class unity and student pride in IMSA to Class Club's prescribed duties. The Class Clubs complained that they were not elected to carry out those tasks, so Student Council extended its At-Large members, who were elected to represent their class and look out for the well-being of students, to their respective Class Clubs to provide counsel on matters of unity and pride. Unfortunately, between 2008 and 2014,



Student Council's relationship with Class Club deteriorated, as the At-Larges began to encroach on the internal affairs of the Class Clubs and make their board members feel more and more uncomfortable. Tensions between the Sophomores-At-Large and Sophomore Class Club in the fall of 2012 escalated to the point that in the following year, Student Council agreed to withdraw the At-Large liaisons and dissolve the relationship between the two organizations.

Cabinet Club Liaisons

In a structure borrowed from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Student Union, a student government organization that is a purely financial body designed to support club activities, every chartered club will have a Student Council member assigned to them. Individual Cabinet members will serve as a source of two-way communication between Student Council and various chartered clubs so that at least one member of Cabinet will have a strong understanding of those clubs' plans and personality. During the year, the liaisons will be called upon to poll the Club Presidents and deliver messages on behalf of Student Council. PME has also agreed to allow Student Council to extend liaisons to its cultural clubs. Even though these clubs are technically not chartered by Student Council, this two-way relationship, something that cultural clubs complain that PME lacks, significantly boosts Student Council's influence over those groups and gives Cabinet the leverage to enforce its funding.

Club Catalog

The 2009 Student Council was the last to release a Club Catalog. This document typically listed all of the chartered clubs, their mission statements, their leadership, and their regular meeting times. It also included advice from upperclassmen on how to choose what clubs to be involved in and tips on time management.

Club Fair

Every year, Student Council hosts an open house event for students to meet all of the chartered clubs at IMSA as well as the co-curriculars and athletic groups. Student Life sets out tables and after all clubs have filled them up, other organizations may begin to take spots. Amy Woods worked with Student Council to coordinate most of the event logistics. The Club Fair is also important because it is an event that individual clubs use to gauge the student body's interest in their activities early on. However, event metrics like club signup sheets and email lists are dramatically higher than the actual level of participation that clubs experience during the year.

The Club Room

The room currently located across from the Student Union is affectionately referred to as the Club Room, though very few clubs use it. While it doesn't seem like much now, it was once a hotly-fought over chunk of real estate. Back in 2010, the room was a miscellaneous Student Life space and an absolute mess, much like the storage room next door. Many departments around campus, from the Engineering department to ITS began to stake claims to the room, hoping to annex it for their own purposes. At that point, Student Council led what Keith McIntosh called a "full-court press" to take the room for the 30-something chartered clubs that did not have regular meeting spaces. Student Council and Student Life stepped in to mediate between the various groups with interests in the room and declared that whichever group was willing to clean the room could have it. Since the other groups were all adult departments, none of them were willing to do this and in a rare show of student collaboration, Student Council Cabinet and many other General Assembly members worked together to clean the room and prepare it for club use. Since then, the room's condition has dwindled. Between 2010 and 2014, clubs began to have fewer and fewer regular meetings and eventually, the room was only being used for Cabinet meetings, decoration work, and storage. Starting in 2013, Student Council began plans to revamp the room for club use. Student



Council requested that the room be unlocked so that students could use it without having to make reservations or contacting the Student Council President. The 2014 Student Council Cabinet planned a redesign of the room to have two halves: one for meetings, with a television monitor, whiteboard, and chairs; and one for decoration work, with tables, craft supplies, and storage units.

Application Library

In the spring of 2014, as a service to the many clubs and students that were engaged in application and transition process, Student Council hosted a page on its website for all active application materials. Club Presidents reported higher outreach numbers and fewer due date questions as a result of the project. However, as of 2018, it still exists within a google drive but is no longer maintained.

Activities Calendar

Created by the Student Council Communications Committee in 2013, the Activities Calendar was designed to help students keep track of a wide range of events. The calendar is hosted on the Student Council website and includes items sorted between Academics, Athletics, Hall and Wing Activities, and other Internal Events. Student Council also has a calendar within this feed to post and update events. The Activities Calendar is very important for planning and scheduling reasons. From a planning perspective, having events for a period mapped out visually is a huge asset to Student Life and Student Council as they deal with frequent faculty complaints that students spend too much time on extracurricular activities as well as a way to avoid conflicts between club activities and other internal events. While the Academy master calendar allows groups to undisputedly reserve closed spaces for events, it provides no protection for open spaces, which are left open and cannot be reserved so that any students and groups can use them. During the 2013-2014 school year many clubs began to approach Student Council with disputes over these spaces and in response, Student Life created a hierarchy of calendar priorities to address such

problems. If a club had indicated that their event would be hosted in an open space, like the Old Caf, on the Activities Calendar, then they would be given priority over a group that did not. And if a group posted an event to the calendar that conflicted in time or location with another internal event, then Student Life could help them reschedule for a better time. However, with the recent shift to Google Suite in 2018, things might be easier to coordinate between the faculty and activities calendar. Amy Woods also stresses to have clubs fill out the activities calendar before mass emailing the student body to reduce confusion and confirm a reservation.

Finals Moratorium

In the winter of 2013, many faculty complained that their students were too preoccupied by club activities to focus on their coursework. Puzzlingly enough, about twenty students in groups like the Student Orchestra and those rehearsing for ASIA's Lunar New Year show complained that their club activities were taking time away from school work and were otherwise poorly planned. While Student Council was investigating the complaints, faculty members approached Amy Woods of Student Life to ask that a moratorium be placed on all events within three weeks of finals for a semester. Student Council countered by proposing that all clubs should have to apply for events within two weeks of finals. The application for a semester-end event was intended to force clubs to arrange all necessary materials and reservations as well as avoid potential scheduling conflicts ahead of time. When the next semester came, Student Council, which was in transition at the time, asked various club presidents if they would be fine with the process, but no contacted clubs that replied stated a need for events in that time period. Student Life decided that neither option was necessary and simply asked that any clubs add their events to the activities calendar by a certain date if they were going to host events in the two weeks before finals. After this, a few teachers criticized Student Council for not being more active in regulating its clubs. Regardless of the validity of those statements, this incident has encouraged two



aspects of Student Council’s relationship with the chartered clubs that should grow over the coming years: two-way lines of communication between cabinet and club presidents and widespread use of the activities calendar.

Club Presidents Guide

The goal of the Club Presidents’ Guide was to create a written guide to provide experienced as well as inexperienced Club Presidents with information they required to effectively run their club. This guide, as of the 2013-2014 academic year focused primarily on logistical aspects, however club management skills were covered briefly. The Club Presidents’ Guide is a small portion of the overarching Club President Support Initiative put together over the previous year. Aside from the Guide, this initiative also included Club Presidents 101 Sessions and other included resources. Some topics that have been brought up in previous years to be included in the guide are application examples, sample posters, expectations of quarterly reports, and tips for engaging members. As of 2018, the Club President’s Guide has become a staple document that details the logistics of the club down to reserving a space and making GA’s to Transition of Power and making fund requests.

Survey and Metrics Guide

Student Council has produced a variety of guides about surveying and metrics design over the past few years. One of the two most recent guides covers topics such as question structure, qualifiers, and data analysis. The other, which is a survey guide in survey form, covers the concept of metrics with special focus on Likert Scales. Surveying and metric design are examples of topics that Student Council members have become well-versed in for internal matters, but prove meaningful to other organizations as well. Metrics are a relatively new aspect of Student Council’s work, but are nonetheless crucial in analyzing feedback, demonstrating growth, and in supplying administrators with meaningful data. Many clubs could benefit from smarter metrics to assess their

events with, and some organizations are even so technical that they will have to improve their metric design in order to accomplish all of their goals. Future Student Councils may exhibit a stronger role as a mentor with clubs through these topics.

Winter Charter

In the spring of 2016, Student Council experimented with the Winter Charter process. Winter charter was another opportunity to charter a club for the second half of the academic year. It was primarily successful in its execution and served its purpose for chartering clubs specifically for second semester. However, not many clubs took advantage of this opportunity as only one club applied for chartering the winter of the 2017-2018 school year. As a result of low demand, Winter Charter is no longer offered for club chartering.

Probation Process

The probation process was set in place to combat college-whoring and resume-padding within IMSA’s club life. The 2016 cabinet birthed the idea of a “probation” system to try to weed out the inactive clubs on IMSA campus which was later solidified by the 2018-2019 cabinet. The probation process acts as a two-strike system where a club would be placed on probation first if it was deemed inactive and if it didn’t meet expectations while on probation, it would be dechartered until the club applied again and passed the club charter process. The 2018-2019 Student Council’s cabinet kept the minimum expectation of a club to be at least 1 event per quarter. Clubs are also expected to complete Transition of Power for the following year.

Club Leaders Collective

The 2016-2017 Student Council cabinet created the Club Leaders Collective Page to be a centralized location for club life-specific information. The purpose of the page was to disperse club guidelines and expectations to IMSA’s Club Leaders in an organized and centralized fashion. It is also a medium for club leaders to communicate with one



another as well as for Student Council to advertise events such as Club Fair and Advisor Appreciation Week. Important documents such as the Club President's Guide, Universal Pipeline System (UPS) forms and other useful documents.

Advisor Appreciation Week

To show gratitude towards the wonderful club advisors, Student Council created Advisor Appreciation Week. Advisors are typically overlooked although they are tasked with buying all the supplies a club needs to go through with an

event. Advisor Appreciation week consists of Student Council distributing a gift (framed club pictures, mugs, and cards) to advisors of each Student Council – sponsored club as well as to co-curriculars. This week is meant to give gratitude to advisors from Student Council on behalf of clubs on campus.

Relevant Administrators

Katie Berger, Executive Director of Student Affairs

Mrs. Berger was one of the temporary advisors of Student Council until Ms. Woods returned from maternity leave. She cares for student interests more than most people think and is a very good speaker as well as is careful to provide other opinions and ideas to the table. She is an extremely versatile administrator as she has experience on the disciplinary side of issues being the former assistant director of student life and now resides at the head of the Student Life office.

Amy Woods, Campus Activities Director

The main advisor of Student Council, Mrs. Woods has been enthusiastic about her new job working in Student Life. Woods has a background in campus events and is very excited about working with the Campus Activities Board (CAB). She is extremely organized and is a good resource to have when working with clubs and staying up-to-date and dedicated.

Dr. Adrienne Coleman, President's Office

Dr. Coleman was once a Student Council advisor, but now advises the Peer Multicultural Educators (PME). She also oversees the Principal Office's community outreach programs and headed the institutional committee that drew up IMSA's diversity plan. It will eventually form the framework for all of the Academy's policies and practices related to diversity – a decidedly ambiguous definition.

